

ties was the chief concern of the commission, and this service was provided principally by traveling libraries. In the mid-1920s, 1,275 traveling libraries, each containing forty books, were sent to 865 places. Seventy percent of the population of the state had no library service other than that provided by the commission.⁴²

Upon the initiation of state aid, most counties developed countywide library service within a few years; but the commission continued to supply reading material to people residing in counties that failed to develop such a system. By 1944 the number of collections was reduced to 260, with most books being sent out in response to a specific request. By mid-century the original traveling library collections were largely superseded by an increased number of local book collections, although the commission continued to serve directly the citizens of the few counties that did not have countywide library service. Initial loans of books to newly established libraries continued to ensure a smooth beginning. The commission's book collection, which consisted of more than 49,000 volumes, was used to supplement local collections, fill individual requests, and provide extensive reference service.⁴³

Two special types of traveling libraries were developed. In December, 1917, the first traveling libraries prepared especially for schools were sent out. Each library contained forty-five volumes and consisted of books for readers in all grades. In 1923 the commission approved the preparation of libraries for Negro schools. By 1926 forty traveling libraries of children's literature and forty libraries of parallel reading for students in high schools for blacks had been prepared. Although the traveling libraries were funded by the commission, their distribution was handled by Dr. N. C. Newbold, director of Negro education in the Department of Public Instruction.⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ *Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Year 1899-1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), I, pp. 928-931.

² R. Kathleen Molz, "The American Public Library: Its Historic Concern for the Humanities," *Role of the Humanities in the Public Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1979), pp. 5-6; Michael H. Harris, "The Role of the Public Library in American Life: A Speculative Essay," *University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science Occasional Papers, No. 117* (Champaign: University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, 1975), pp. 13-14, hereinafter cited as Harris, "The Role of the Public Library";